

SATCHMO'S LEGACY LIVES ON:
The Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation, Inc.

By: Carolyn Appel

It is no secret that Louis Armstrong loved music and was passionate about people. What is less known, however, is that he began a foundation in order to support and further develop those two interests. In 1969, Pops began working on the bylaws of an organization that continues to thrive today. The Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation, Inc. (LAEF) was started with an initial investment of Armstrong's own \$40,000 and has grown to a multi-million dollar musical education institution.

The non-profit Foundation has supported numerous educational activities, one of which is on display here at the LAJE conference. The Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong Summer Jazz Camp All-Stars is an ensemble comprised of six musicians who have previously attended the camp. All working musicians, these alumni are a combination of high school and college students, educators and band leaders.

Based in New Orleans, this jazz education program has been in existence since 1995 and is offered to youngsters between the ages of 10 and 20 years old actively involved in a music education program. Jazz Camp has attracted many young, talented musicians who have had the opportunity to study under the tutelage of visiting artists-in-residence like Wynton Marsalis, Jon Faddis, and Barry Harris. Edward "Kidd" Jordan serves as the program's Artistic Director.

Other Foundation activities in Satchmo's home town include The Louis Armstrong Public School Jazz Outreach Program and the Armstrong Quintet, both based at the University of New Orleans. The outreach program represents a unique approach to jazz education by giving select public schools the opportunity to receive free jazz instruction from qualified undergraduate students. In exchange for their performances on swing, call and response, and the blues, members of the Armstrong Quintet will receive a full scholarship towards a Masters Degree in Jazz Education. The Quintet also performs throughout the city and at local festivals and fairs.

Columbia University has also received tremendous support from the LAEF. In 1999, the University began the Center for Jazz Studies, which examines the broad reach of Jazz and its impact on American culture (www.jazz.columbia.edu). Scholars from all disciplines have been invited to speak at Columbia, but it wasn't until the LAEF donated \$500,000 that a full-time professorship could be designated. The Louis Armstrong Visiting Professor chair was established to hire each year an individual who embodies the qualities representing Armstrong. The size of the Jazz Studies program has blossomed from a few dozen to several hundred, with all other Columbia students receiving some basic knowledge of Jazz through the Core Curriculum.

Taking Columbia's lead, the University of Chicago has begun a program in Jazz Studies, loosely based on the New York model. The LAEF has helped to fund this endeavor. The Juilliard School is another college program to receive the generosity of the Foundation. The LAEF has established a Louis Armstrong Scholarship with the donation of \$5,000 that will aid a student from the Jazz Department.

Queens College in New York has benefited from the Foundation's interest in preserving Louis's personal history. In 1985, the College was chosen as the main depository

of Armstrong memorabilia and has worked tirelessly to preserve the different objects. Thousands of letters, tapes, manuscripts, and personal items have been archived, available for discovery by researchers and enthusiasts from around the world.

Aside from numerous University-level programs, the LAEF has taken other important steps to ensure the success of Armstrong's vision. The Foundation has contributed to Jazz at Lincoln Center (J@LC) in many ways over the years, the two organizations sharing the belief that children are the future of Jazz education. Jazz for Young People™, first a concert series featuring J@LC Artistic Director Wynton Marsalis, evolved into an educational product designed to teach young people about the music. The Jazz for Young People Curriculum is a package containing teacher lesson plans, student exercises and games, and recordings by the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra that has been purchased by hundreds of schools and is available as an online course on J@LC's web site (www.jazzatlincolncenter.org). The LAEF also donated one million dollars to build the Louis Armstrong Classroom in the new Rose Hall facility. The room is specifically designed for the education of children and hosts programs such as WeBop!, a course for kids age two to five in order to learn about the rich heritage of Jazz.

In his final days, Louis Armstrong was treated at the Beth Israel Hospital in New York City. Based on his positive experience with the doctors and staff, the LAEF later began a music therapy program in the Hospital, which has given other patients a positive experience as well. This program brings in trained therapists to use recorded and live music as a way to expedite the healing process of pediatric patients by lowering their levels of pain and stress.

In 1995, the image of Satchmo playing his horn could be seen on a U.S. postal stamp and his music can now be heard throughout the airport in New Orleans, having been recently renamed the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport (abbreviation JZY).

Armstrong's home in Corona, Queens, his house with wife Lucille starting in 1943, had been granted National Landmark status in 1977 due to the work of the LAEF. With the help of the Foundation and Queens College, the home has been preserved and was turned into a museum in 2003. Visitors from all over have come to the home to learn about the man who influenced so many. They can see his solid gold bathroom sink and hear recordings of him in conversation with his wife playing on speakers throughout the house (www.satchmo.net).

The Foundation's efforts have raised an awareness of Armstrong to people in so many different ways. From kids to adults, the educational mission of Louis lives on. Check out the Louis Armstrong alumni band at the IAJE conference for a presentation focusing on early Jazz.

Carolyn Appel is a freelance writer and has worked for several jazz education programs including those at Columbia University, the Juilliard School, Jazz at Lincoln Center, and the Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation, Inc.